

HB1066 - AG Hate Crimes Commission Testimony.pdf

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Baltimore District

Written Testimony

**House Bill 1066- Hate Crimes - Commission on Hate Crime
Response and Prevention – Establishment
Judicial Proceedings Committee – April 6, 2023**

Support

Background: House Bill 1066 (HB1066) would codify the Attorney General's Hate Crimes Task Force, making it a formal, permanent Commission with dedicated staff. Members of the commission would include the JCRC of Greater Washington, the Baltimore Jewish Council, NAMI, Maryland State Police, the NAACP, the Immigration Outreach Service Center, and other key stakeholders that have already been established as members of the Task Force. The purpose of the commission would be to develop strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activities and evaluate state laws and policies relating to hate. Annual findings would be reported to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council, which represents The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and its agencies, respectfully urges the committee to formalize the Attorney General's Hate Crimes Task Force.

Statistics show a significant rise in antisemitic incidents in Maryland. Just a few weeks ago, the ADL reported that there were 109 antisemitic incidents in Maryland in 2022, a 98% increase from the 55 in 2021. Additionally, according to the Maryland State Police's 2021 Hate Bias Report, anti-Jewish hate crime incidents account for more than 1 in 10 hate crime incidents, the second highest bias after anti-Black hate crimes.

The task force was created to directly address the recent climate of fear and intimidation caused by rising hate/bias incidents. It's clear that this issue directly affects our community and other minority groups throughout Maryland and across the country. By formalizing the Attorney General's Hate Crimes Task Force as a Commission, we believe that all religious and minority communities that have fallen victim to hate crimes will be better protected.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on HB1066 to assist our state's collective fight against hate.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

ADL Testimony HB1066 hate crime commission in JPR.

Uploaded by: Meredith Weisel

Position: FAV



Maryland General Assembly
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
April 6, 2023

Testimony of Meredith R. Weisel
ADL Washington D.C. Regional Director

ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit this testimony in **support of *HB1066, Hate Crimes – Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention – Establishment***, a bill that would establish a commission to develop strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activity and evaluate State laws and policies relating to hate crimes.

Since 1913, the mission of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” For decades, one of the most important ways in which ADL has fought against bigotry and antisemitism has been by investigating extremist threats across the ideological spectrum, including from white supremacists and other far-right violent extremists, producing research to inform the public, and working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry, and elected leaders to promote best practices to effectively address and counter these threats. Further, ADL conducts an annual *Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents*, which is widely used by law enforcement, elected officials, and the community at-large to not only understand how to respond to antisemitic incidents, but how to create change.

Related to this work, ADL has long been recognized as a leading resource on effective responses to violent bigotry, including hate crimes. In 1981, ADL crafted the first model hate crime law in the country, and today, 46 states, as well as the District of Columbia, have hate crime laws, many of which are based on or substantially similar to our model, which was unanimously upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. We were also privileged to lead a broad coalition of civil rights, religious, educational, professional, law enforcement, and civic organizations for more than a decade in support of the 2009 Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA).

Behind every hate crime statistic, there is a person, a family, a community – dealing with the unimaginable. Hate crimes cause a distinct type of harm that can have a lasting, immeasurable impact. This is because hate crimes target people due to their protected, immutable characteristics – race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, disability – things about a person that are central to identity and cannot be changed.

ADL is proud to be a leading anti-hate organization that has been able to help thousands of people who report hate and bias incidents to us. We have been able to help communities across the country by reporting on trends, educating lawmakers and law enforcement and advocating for stronger protections against incidents and crimes. ADL has been a part of the Maryland Attorney General’s hate crimes working group since its inception and we look forward to being a part of this extremely important commission.

There is unfortunately no magic wand that we can wave to undo the irreparable harm that hate crimes cause. Yet here in Maryland, we can make sure that our laws and our policies are crafted in a way that will help stem the rising tide and, to the maximum extent possible, help make victims whole. And while there is no single fix to the alarming trend of hate crimes and bias incidents, together we can take meaningful action to fight hate for good by creating this important commission.

We accordingly urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to give HB1066 a favorable report.